



Control of Laboratory Vehicles

Lawrence Berkeley National Laboratory Lessons Learned

LL-2001-01

Concern Statement: Laboratory vehicles can be misused and/or stolen if not properly controlled.

Applicable to: All LBNL personnel

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Incident

A Laboratory vehicle that was allocated to an LBNL Division could not be located one work morning. The vehicle is routinely parked at the same location near Building 71 and is used by approximately 20 Division employees. The Division conducted a search of the vehicle to no avail. LBNL Security and the University of California Police Department (UCPD) were contacted, and they conducted their own search.

During the following week, the Lab was notified that the vehicle was found parked in a residential street near the LBNL boundary. Neighbors had reported the abandoned vehicle to police and it had been towed away. The recovered vehicle was found to be in good condition with minimal increase in mileage.

Cause

The undamaged condition and location of the vehicle near the Lab indicate that the vehicle was probably not stolen. The most likely explanation is an employee or contractor took the vehicle from the Lab for unauthorized use. The person who took the vehicle probably abandoned it near the Lab where it would be found as a way of returning it without being identified.

Vehicle management procedures at the Division are informal. Interviews with vehicle users revealed that the keys are usually left in the vehicle. The Division does have a vehicle use log, but it is infrequently used by Division personnel. Because many people have access to the vehicle and no reliable usage records are in place, the vehicle, as shown in this incident, can be easily stolen or misused.



Recommended Actions

- ❑ Divisions should rigorously maintain their sign-out vehicle logs. At a minimum, the logs should identify the vehicle user, intended destination, and the last odometer reading.
- ❑ Vehicle keys should be stored in a secure location when not in use. No keys should be left in the vehicle at any time when unattended.
- ❑ All Division personnel should be reminded through electronic or written communication that Laboratory property, such as Laboratory furnished vehicles, cannot be used for any purpose other than official Laboratory business. Laboratory policy on this issue can be found in section 6.02 of the LBNL Regulations and Procedures Manual (RPM).
- ❑ All Divisions should review, and where necessary, improve their vehicle management procedures to prevent misuse or theft of their vehicles.

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Further Information

Any questions regarding this incident or the lessons learned may be directed to Bill Llewellyn (x7726).

For other lessons learned, go to: http://www.lbl.gov/ehs/lessons_learned